











# LYRICAL POEMS

BY  
JOHN ALEXANDER CHAPMAN

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*Dedicated to*

**JANIE DENIZE CHAPMAN**



**Answering the fool in me according to his folly.**

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## SWEETPEA RING

IN a hollow, worm-holed nutshell keeping  
House a fairy. Under counterpane  
Cut from primrose now that fairy sleeping ;  
But one riding gnat, with gossamer rein,  
Cheeks a-reddened, whistling, comes to wake her.  
He will jump in, hole-size, kiss, and take her  
To the Beetle House in little shoes,  
There to say "This Sweetpea Ring I choose."

So will Sweetpea Ring be wed by firefly-  
light, and leaf-held water drops, in each  
Winking star reflected. Next the soft, dry  
Thistledown will make a bed for them. The beech  
Will give a nut ; the oak a cup ; the corn  
Give ear and straw, when fairy boy is born.  
And grass will shake, and seed fall down, and berry  
Juice in moss-cups make the nutshell merry.



## SONG I

**S**ILENCE, a little breath of God, earth-love  
Make the songs together  
That in men's hearts are heard,  
Cheering their weary spirits like summer weather.  
Thither as swiftly come as Ark-freed bird

## SONG II

**B**E your song so—ever beautiful;  
Thought and word and age-old melody:  
Be your singing beautiful and true;  
But in this Day of Wrong  
Let some things you do  
Be more beautiful than song.

## THE SEA

SHE

**H**AVE you ever noticed the longing  
the sea whispers,  
Falling, wave on wave, on the shingle,  
when the wind  
Is wind, but is not high? That is  
the sea calling:  
That is the sea calling, but with  
a cruel voice.  
I have often listened to the longing  
the sea whispers,  
And have wished to run, and give my-  
self to it.

HE

I who am a man am whispering long-  
ing also.  
What could the sea do more, Darling,  
than man could do?

LYRICAL POEMS

It would wash you hither, thither in  
its races ;  
But it would be washing all the drift-  
wood too.  
It would not know that yours was a  
woman's hair, not seaweed :  
It would fill your ear, but as any  
empty shell.  
Could it stand behind you, and put  
a shoulder forward  
For a darling head to rest on, lean-  
ing back ?  
Has the sea two red lips to press  
upon two red lips,  
Coming laughing down to meet sweet-  
ness springing up—

SHE

Yes, you hold me and kiss me, but,  
caresses done, you leave me.  
Soon you weary and go, and your  
footsteps die away.  
All about me, around me, are silent,  
empty spaces,  
And a woman's heart is hungry as the  
night is for the day;  
As the night for light to come, for  
the stars to go to their places ;

For the sun to warm the earth, for  
the hills to wake and play ;  
For the quick in-breathing horses, the  
thundering hooves, the races  
Out of the drifting night-mist into  
the red of day—  
Oh, I am wild ; I am maddened—Dearest,  
you talk a little ;  
But soon a silence follows, and the  
words—I know them all.  
There is no mystery more—it is all  
so plain and homely ;  
And listen, listen, listen, how the waves  
on the shingle call.  
Why did you marry a girl with gypsy blood,  
and the desert  
Asses' milk in her breasts, and the wild  
wind in her hair ?  
I cannot learn to be still—listen, the  
sea is saying  
Things that soothe and nestle, things  
that crush and tear ;  
Things that wind and enter into my brain  
and pulses ;  
Things that hiss, and echo, and gather,  
and sob, and dare—  
What could a woman want that the sea  
would not seek and find her ?

Or if the blue and green deceived, they  
would laugh at her,  
And promise her other treasures, and  
wash her in drifting eddies,  
Drawing the moon and starshine to play  
with her face and hair.  
Or they would weave her clothing of foam,  
and dash her body,  
Chafing her limbs to heat in long green  
clashing tides—  
Listen, listen, the sea—I think in  
some far-off ocean  
There is a beach prepared for the blue  
sea's pearly brides—  
Long white sands, sea flowers, shell music,  
and fishes swimming ;  
Pearls for the girls to string that some  
great cavern hides.  
But in a little a terror, and then each  
glad heart shivers :  
One by one they go, pale to an aching  
night ;  
For it devours them, the sea, as it  
swallows up all earth's rivers  
The hungry sea devours them—O pale  
man, hold me tight,

## HE

The sea does not tell you that : your  
unseen self is speaking.  
The longing you listen to is the long-  
ing of your own heart.  
I cannot comfort you, Darling. Each must  
find his own expression.  
God has made too different man and  
woman's part.  
Each has an inner voice. Man listens  
to his, and follows.  
Is it to build him a ship ? He listens  
and builds him one.  
He calls it after a maid. He hammered  
the nails to the music  
Of that maid's name—at peace, but  
so that the work was done.  
So that the work was done—if her eyes  
are bright in the evening,  
That is enough, and she smile, and so  
that she bear him sons  
For new ships' building hereafter ; for  
man hands on his wisdom  
And so his days are short, and his bright  
river runs  
Merrily through the fields to a shore  
where all waters mingle—  
Or is it to build him an Art ? Again  
he builds him one ;

Only the more withdrawn, in a concentrated passion,  
Forgetting the maid the more—even  
after the work is done.  
Now she? Has God put a stop; so that  
she cannot listen  
To the voice of her unseen soul, or  
does it more slowly grow  
In volume through the ages, and still  
is faint and feeble;  
Now heard from here, now there, leading  
her to and fro?  
The world is fuller for her of poetry  
and of music  
Than for the man, and of mystery, and  
unfulfilled desire—  
The desire of the flower and the bird,  
and even the light and shadow  
The rock, and the sea, and the clouds,  
and the darkness, and the fire  
*She* thinks, but it is her own—the  
desire of her budded spirit—  
When will it grow to leaf; when will  
it put out flower?  
Was she bound too long, a slave, in  
the lust of a brutal market?  
Is now the rosy dawn seen of her  
freedom's hour?

## LOVE IN AGE

**W**HEN a man is young and loves a maid,  
All is plain, the light, the shade ;  
The unparalleled sweetnesses : the urge  
Onward and upward—like the surge  
That takes clean-bowed, well riveted ships  
At one plunge from the hammering slips  
Deep to their native element ;  
For to love is to do what a man is meant.

But when a man is old, but still  
Young to love, then the sweet ill  
Comes in a manner to veil the whole.  
A child's face then may surprise his soul,  
An instant seen in a village street.  
Her lips, the light in her eyes, how sweet.  
The light in her eyes—that is the chief  
To give the sharp stab of pleasure-grief.  
It is a beauty not all their own,  
But partly born where his love alone.  
Must keep ; for come her time to wed,  
His will be an all-silvered head,  
Or his will have been that earthy bed. .



## THE CUP

**M**AKE of thyself a cup, Darling.  
I will make me wine or water.  
Let thy heart beat in the cup :  
I shall be enough to fill it.  
Then will desire be stilled,  
Or only to thy heart-beat moving.

## NAMING HER

**I**F you love a maid,  
You will love her name. Which name ?  
Will it always be the same ?  
One used every day would fade  
From its brightness ; so you keep  
Always one that doth express  
All her utter darlingness  
In a star-lit, sentinelled  
Sea-girt citadel of sleep,  
Many-towered, and many-belled  
To wake and chime, when it is time  
For word with happiness to rhyme.

Another name will speak the praise  
Treasured up for solemn days,  
When a good fight has been won,  
Bravely fought through clouds of night,  
And again it is the sun  
Uprisen. Another name will run  
Forth to meet a teasing spite,  
Followed after by delight.  
So will always be a name  
For one who never is the same.

## DELIA

**NOTES** of bell, and beech-tree green, and starlight  
**Make** her voice, and dress and skin.  
**Ring**ing bells, and scent of thyme, and blood-red  
**Poppies** nodding to a tune within  
**Honeysuckled**, wild-rose hedged-in meadow  
**Call** her darling, and the shame  
**And** the darkness of her absence  
**Make** her hair and name.

## HER HAIR

**I**F only I had my Sweetheart's hair to play with !  
Now to tumble it about my face.  
Now to grasp it all, and make it stay, with  
Hands beneath her chin held, round her face ;  
Framing cheek-curve, shining eyes, and brow-snow ;  
Framing lips, which looked at long, would long  
For the kiss delayed, and, trembling, sweet grow  
As apple ripening the sunny summer long.

## UNCONQUERABLE LOVE

GIVE me thy hands, Love—  
But thou, Love, hast none.  
Give me thy lips, Love—  
But thou, Love, hast none.  
Speak with thy voice, Love—  
But thou, Love, hast none ;  
Formless, timeless, unsearchable one.

## INSPIRATION

**L**END me thy soul, if only for a day ;  
Send thou it forth from those grey eyes ;  
Beat with me heart to heart a little. Stay  
Close to my side while one hour dies.  
There was the world, there was my brain to note  
Form of it, colour of it, seeking sign of God :  
There in my book are the weary things I wrote :  
This is the way my pilgrim footsteps plod ;  
But breathe thou into me, and I will leap  
Straight to the last, where Life's dark secrets sleep.

## MADALA GREY

**M**ADALA Grey, Madala Grey,  
Only a girl in a story.  
Pretty name, Madala Grey.  
Beautiful, too, the soul you are given.  
So I will love you, Madala Grey.

Suppose that God who made us men,  
Made us so that even our thoughts  
Lived for ever. Then Ariels,  
Calibans and Prosperos  
Would not be all shadowy.

So in some peopled heaven may be  
Madala making cowslip balls.

And if not, then the writer,  
Or some one whom the writer knew,  
Had a soul like Madala's.  
Soul then for my loving :  
Whom I want for stilling  
Of a sense unsatisfied,  
As too fine for common day,  
And what common day employs.

We are dreamers: imagination  
Devours our life.  
We would love without a fault;  
Never bring a shadow to  
Face of her we love.

We are not fine enough, coarse clay  
Made of, greed with greed commingled,  
Fated so to bring of shadows  
Many on her face we love.  
But if those we love are made  
In our thought; if we make both  
Loving and response together;  
If it all is story told  
To ourselves, then why not make  
All as sweet as violet,  
Wood-grown, dewy, scented,  
Forest eyes for kissing,  
Beautiful blue and green together ?

So I will love you, Madala;  
You or the unknown with that soul,  
Somewhere making cowslip balls.

## 2.

What I want you specially  
For is for a thing so fine  
As would just suit spirit.  
Listen; I will tell you.



I had a son. He died.  
Another son was born. I thought  
That Holy Writ in amulet  
Hung round his neck would charm  
Goblins away. Not right? Then thought  
Must do as well, woven round him,  
I said. Now do that, Madala.  
Watch over Paul that no harm come.

My own thought is so foolish.  
Come wish to do him good that way,  
Then I remember all that night  
In March, when one came knocking,  
Saying, "Madame vous appelle".  
Then I went and first saw Paul.

"Madame vous appelle"—the words  
Haunt me since then. Because in French?  
Perhaps. Perhaps because never,  
I used to think, should I be ever  
Called by a woman. Not the kind of man  
Any girl cares for—so my thought.

The rest of that night? Once,  
Years before, I slept on Hampstead Heath,  
A little birch clump hiding me  
From the policeman. Just at dawn  
A bird called, one. Clear in the air,  
Thrilling me. Then a silence,

Say for four minutes, then a crash,  
All the birds within hearing all together,  
And hundreds more than you would think  
Were in that peopled place.

Paul seen; that night remembered,  
Suddenly came desire to hear  
That crash again, then twenty years  
Old in my brain. So in the dark,  
Over the snow, tramping, I spent  
The night till dawn. March is a month  
Too early, there in Blonay, for the birds.  
There was no crash. Only at five  
A blackbird singing  
From a tall tree, I thinking  
Ever of Paul, and how his brother died:  
Till blackbird's song seemed charm  
For Paul, keeping him safe.  
And now it is as if the letters  
Making his name were blackbird song.

## 3.

Leave off cowslip ball making.  
Unkissed Madala unkissed come.  
I want to talk to you, Madala.

I love your name, Madala.  
Lipless breastless word.

Pour the milk of the stars into  
Cup, but not for Paul, urchin.  
Make him a cowslip ball, Madala.

## 4.

Birch clump keeping out policeman,  
Blackbird, cowslip, Paul and Madala,  
Brain of father dreaming amulet,  
Remembered dead one's inspiration—  
Wherein rooted, whence the loveliness?

## CHARMIAN

CHARMIAN, on the world's stage little seen,  
And little heard, o'ershadowed by that Queen.  
And yet we know thee, girl; thy dimpled arm,  
Thy smile, wit, mischief, trusting heart and charm  
Who (as thy name is) is as Spring's first breath,  
Kept ever sweet by thy devoted death.

## RUTH

**H**ER name is spelt in four bright stars.  
Their sound is the music of old, sweet bars.  
The whole earth gathers up its truth  
At the mercy and beauty and trust of Ruth.

TO A CHILD

**D**EAR Little Child, dear little mystery,  
There is a thing to say—I love you.  
Only three words, but they are as long as history.

## KITE CALLS \*

**K**ITE calls in the morning  
These days of December :  
Kite calls in the evening.

I my Love lacking  
Hear and remember  
Hers and young voices.

Old trees are budding  
These days of December.  
Buds are like children.

Come, girls, assemble.  
Earth's vows remember.  
Give us more children.

---

\* In Bengal, where trees do bud in December.

TO I.H.

**I**F in a waste of sand a man should spend  
Year after year, and make of pain a friend;  
If the cold dawn was grey, and the eve went  
Unlit by star in the bleak firmament:  
If never bird sang—but one day a rain  
Fell, and the night lit all her stars again:  
If the dawn saw a little point of green  
Thrust from the ground where never flower  
    was seen;  
If day by day it grew till one flushed hour  
Colour peeped out and broke, and a  
    dream-flower  
Opened blue petals, flame succeeding flame,  
That man would feel as he when Iris came.



## AT LAST

**H**USH. He had waited fifty years. One day  
Sign of her came, a hint, a stir.  
Another day another, but she never came.  
"Soul, have no hope more, never more, of her.  
She must have died, a little child." To-day  
Looking up he saw her—mouth and eyes and hair,  
And soul and spirit speaking, and in his heart awoke  
Joy that was too vast for any heart to bear.  
"So hush, my heart," he said, "and God will  
make an ease.  
He will lay my weary head at last upon  
her knees."

## KATHLEEN

ALL for the Love of the Western Land,  
Snowdrop blossom, Kathleen, Kathleen.  
Up to the shore a slope of sand,  
Crimson poppy, Kathleen, Kathleen.  
Lambs in meadows with daisy-chains,  
Windflower blossom, Kathleen, Kathleen,  
Peacocks in gardens flaunting trains,  
Snowdrop blossom, Kathleen, Kathleen.  
And red the blood that the men would shed,  
Crimson poppy, Kathleen, Kathleen,  
Only to make more soft thy bed,  
Windflower blossom, Kathleen, Kathleen.

## TO STELLA MARIS

STELLA Maris, Stella, star  
Of the sea, the two things are,  
Night so bright and sea so blue,  
Not more beautiful than you.

Stella Maris, star, arise :  
Time is long and daylight dies :  
Night is kindly, lit by you :  
Light, O light, my darkness too.

Light of star and sound of sea—  
If to mortal man could be  
Music sung as pure as they  
All his sorrow would away ;

As my sorrow would, if you,  
Stella Maris, speaking true,  
Promised me—but I would not  
Burden lay on you ; and what

Is there, Stella, left to claim,  
Now that you have told your name ?  
I have heard it from your lips,  
Where the deep sea leadeth ships.

What can thought of girl not lead  
Man to—good or evil deed?  
Be, then, pure as waters are;  
Live, God near, a spirit-star.

## ROBINETTA

SOMEWHERE—if I've a little forgotten where,  
It does not matter—there's a road, a moor,  
A cliff, and a bright spot of colour there.  
Suddenly looking up from work, "I'm sure,"  
I say, "I've read that somewhere. Where?"

Then: "Now

I know—*her* book." That beckoning spot of red  
Covers an all-earth's-sweetness gathering brow,  
The red silk cap on Robinetta's head.

## THE MESSAGE

**I** sent her the Robin. The Robin came, and said :  
"I, the Red Breast, say unto thee, the White Breast,  
What is thy wish, where thy lover should lay his  
head?"

"He has the thought, O Robin, and that there beats  
A heart beneath it that ever is true to him.  
It sweetens the water he drinks, the bread he eats".

## THE BLANKET

**W**HEN it is getting dark they put below it  
Something, but what it is it does not know  
Till it is warmed; then it begins to know it—  
“That is a little arm and that a toe”.  
So whisper together the little blanket voices;  
“Yes, it is growing, but still is soft and round  
And pink”—and the blanket’s little soul rejoices  
All the night long, but never makes a sound.  
But in the morning Ann’s red fingers take it  
Roughly away, and out at the window shake it.

## BEING SWEETHEARTS

AS clothes remade, turned inside out,  
That they may have what's fair to show,  
Men turn their weaknesses about ;  
And those who cannot forward go,  
Go round about, but find a way  
On their self-praising tongue to make  
What is of night look like the day :  
And darkness love for its own sake.

Now may I say I am not sure  
Of one thing that myself I taught,  
Yet verily with mind quite pure  
Of self-deceiving guile, I thought.  
Out of some things in Holy Writ  
And other books I fashioned it,  
And was to guide my steps thereby  
O'er smooth and rough—whichever lay  
Beyond me on my pilgrim way—  
Until it came my time to die ;  
And even then, among the wan  
Shadows that flitted with me fast,  
Some help from it should bear me on,  
Till all the dreadful way was past.



## 2

There came a girl to have the rule—  
One nurtured in another school—  
Within my house, which meant o'er me  
As well, if I should think that fit,  
Or whether I should, or whether I shouldn't:  
Who was to call the tune was she.  
Agree I might, or not, she wouldn't  
Admit her knowledge of Holy Writ,  
Or anything else, was not enough  
To show my ethics to her as plainly  
A weakling's preferring smooth to rough.

I hoped she'd change her mind, but vainly.  
Time passeth, but she changeth not,  
Or owneth not, and that's as much.  
And she's a pretty girl, and such  
A darling—oh, but really, truly.  
I'd like, unless it means unduly  
Stretching truth, to think that what  
She says is right. But all my liking,  
Trying one time, kissed on Sunday ;  
Then again, unknissed, on Monday—  
Hasn't made the smallest jot  
Of difference. But this is striking  
Much too light a note, for grave  
Is the matter ; and that gave—

Its being so—the impulse needed  
For my asking in a song,  
One she would not leave unheeded,  
If my darling is not wrong.

It *is* a very serious matter  
At one girl's bidding to undo,  
However beautiful and true  
She be, what many years of thought  
Have made a rule. And do they know,  
Do our girls know as know they ought,  
That two and two and twice eight go  
To make up twenty, whence one takes  
Five, leaving fifteen ; but God makes  
His creatures on another plan ?  
You cannot take this from a man,  
Whate'er it be, and leave a whole  
Left over, body, mind, and soul,  
To love and lean on. You must ply  
Some much more subtle alchemy,  
If you've a husband who's not quite  
All that your busy brain thinks right.  
All that, my own dear girl may say,  
She knows right well, and that 'twas just  
Her alchemy at work to-day  
That set me thinking that I must

Consider well that 'tis no treason,  
But how men make their darlings Queens,  
To give their rules up without reason ;  
That that's what being sweethearts means.

THE SORROW OF THE DEATH OF LITTLE  
CHILDREN. 11\*

1.

WE gave thee all, we gave thee all we could,  
In love and trust  
That God consented, and would make it good.

We gave thee life, and if it hath no worth,  
Now thou art dead,  
It is a doom that heaven will share and earth ;

Which we shall share—oh, should our hearts  
be sore

Who have so short  
A time, and so much beauty to think o'er ?

Unless for beauty undisclosed we mourn ;  
For if all end  
With death, then we are utterly forlorn ;

---

\* For the earlier portion of this poem see *Christus Natus Est* (Calcutta, 1923)

But if no thing created doth depart  
Back to the void  
It issued from, eternally thou art

A mind—which opened here to little things;  
Which hour by hour  
We watched, and for whose beauty something sings

To-day in our sad hearts; a mind whose power,  
In that new sphere,  
Can know no hampering of place or hour;

And what it needs the forward steps to guide  
God, in his love  
For little children, surely will provide.

## 2.

Each night, before I sleep, I say:  
God bless you, Little One, and then  
Some picture I recall,  
Or well-remembered trait;

But would that what I do—yea, all—  
Might have the love of him for law;  
That love of him might be  
The very breath I draw.

Then, at the last, in some full line,  
The world should feel and hear and see  
    How beautiful he was,  
    And its heart beat with mine.

No, not for loveliness of theme. Because  
It felt the influence, subdued  
    To which my soul would show  
    With what it was imbued.

## 3.

Oh, is there anything, my child,  
That you could do for her and me?  
You made, when you were here and smiled  
The best of our felicity;  
But now the heavy days go past,  
And other comfort there is none,  
But clinging to the thought so fast,  
How well we loved you, little one;  
How you, who were so soon to be  
Laid the last time on earth to rest,  
Were with us so continually—  
Here in my arms, there at her breast.

## 4.

O Little Sweetheart, did you know  
    You were so soon to die,  
And did resolve that you would show,

Before the days went by,  
The days so few, how deep the joy  
Might be about a little boy ?

You gave us more than we could tell  
Each other of ; but each  
Knew what was passing, and as well  
Were words of happy speech  
Addressed to you, and your replies  
Were read in those dear laughing eyes.

## 5.

Of all he did we loved  
This most—the way he moved  
His head to watch whoever stirred, and when  
Eyes and eyes met, he smiled  
So sweetly, that a child  
Of all God's gifts seemed the most perfect then.

## 6.

A joy has ever power to make  
A difference in things :  
They change, all suddenly, and take  
Some of the light it brings.  
If light, though darkness follows, rest  
On life, that is faith's final test.

On life from the gathered dark apart ;  
    For empty would they be,  
The words that should deny the heart  
    Its human misery—  
Empty, and senseless as a clod,  
Whether men uttered them or God.

We still must think that things are seen  
    More truly in the light  
Of some great joy, than when the sheen  
    Is dulled and faded quite ;  
More truly when heaven's light they wear  
Than in the dead and sunless air

Till darkness final, absolute,  
    Down-rushing is descried,  
The faith in which we love impute  
    To heaven is justified,  
And pity felt for those in woe  
More than we one another show.

## 7

Around his resting-place there lie  
Four other children's graves ;  
But no one comes but thou and I.  
The others 'cross the waves  
Long since are gone, and now are laid  
Beneath some English church's shade.



It would be beautiful if they  
In heaven should feel his claim  
To love, because his body lay  
So close beside the name  
That marks a little longer where  
Each breathed the broken-hearted prayer.

O India, if we serve thee well,  
Think not the debt all paid.  
Forget not, when thy fathers tell  
The children, that we made  
*That* sacrifice, nor whom the sea  
Taketh. We leave behind with thee

The graves in which our children lie  
So thick, that if the dead  
Awoke and stood, while thou wentst by.  
The sight would bow thy head.  
Forget *us*, if thou must, but keep  
Holy the places where *they* sleep.

## 8

The law hath been established; and to rule  
Each thing conforms;  
And in that hard, soul-tempering, iron school  
Man is implanted, who, in his despair,  
Craves that an ear  
Should hear his desolate, heart-broken prayer;

But it, I think, could any be, would be  
Not so soon heard  
And answered as the pathetic things that we  
Have heard his little brother, little sister, say,  
Since Richard died—  
Things of a trustfulness to win their way:  
Yet to be gathered to the silent fold  
Of Time when we,  
Whose hearts the inexpressible pathos smote, are cold.

## 9

Oh, that he could come back  
One day a week, one sun-drenched happy day,  
And smile again. If I could take the way  
That leads to Death, and pass him in the dark,  
Hearing his little footsteps, and so knowing  
That he would soon be folded in her arms  
To whom such loving recompense is owing,  
And should be paid. If then I could return  
To hear of all his beautiful new ways,  
And who his little playmates are in heaven—  
If that could be, my Darling, how the days  
Would glow about our feet.  
The going and the coming in such peace  
Would shed a light in all the empty rooms;  
Would spread a silence through the empty house.

I have longed all my life for such a peace ;  
For some deep, hushed communion, in the light  
Not of this earth, but of eternity.  
What if it were the gift of his dead hands ;  
What if the hush, that day we buried him,  
Grew deeper, was prolonged, on, on, and on ;  
Never to end until some morning came,  
And when I woke his hands were in my hands ?

## HARD CHASTITY

**I**T was a pool of deep, dark summer rain  
That in the moonlight two men stood beside.  
In each there throbbed the pain  
Of the forbidden, the unsought-for bride;  
Forbidden lest their marrying young retard  
The slow uplift of their class to wealth and ease,  
Well-housed and well-groomed leisure—but how hard;  
Would it be sin for such to seize  
Each a sweet girl, and with her make night sweet,  
Or sweeter, for already 'twas summer-scented  
With may, and for naked limbs a cowslipped sheet  
Was spread under a wine-dark heaven, tented?

To kiss the night away, and when dawn came  
To watch the girl in the pool, and see the flame  
Of sunrise pink her lately budded breast—  
Would it have been all sin and lust and shame?  
Such thoughts in those two men were hard  
    down-pressed,  
Silent, tight-strangled: for a word would have made  
The Elder-spoken, text-backed moral teaching

Rush into ruin, and they were afraid;  
Afraid of the kinder preaching,  
Spoken at dawn, of soft-fleshed beasts,  
As better to follow. "Listen! Strawberry feasts,  
Gathered in dock leaves, for pretty, red-lipped girls—  
Young ivy leaves and roses in soft brown curls  
Entwined—and, after feasting, the beechen shade  
For two, and one a maid.  
Afar the sea makes clean the shore!  
Under you earth is pure;  
Of bells and cups a many more  
Uppgrow to heal and cure.  
Seek as the flowers your joy.  
What is there to annoy,  
If breast that baby hand will beat  
With man's cheek pressed to it is sweet?  
Then take her, take her!"

So the soft-fleshed beasts,  
Moving in warm fields, nature's priests;  
And his mate a-following each.  
Sin? Was there not in clean-barked beech,  
With hands laid on, of purity enough,  
Though one was ram to ewe,  
To cleanse? What, then, to rue?  
Why turn smooth years to rough?

Something of that awoke in one of them. Then stirred  
A shiver; for a druid voice was heard,  
There by the beech-tree-shaded pool of rain,  
And he would give a sign, and ease his pain.  
Why was the druid worshipping, and cut  
The mistletoe, and stones set upright, but  
That in the life-force stimulating man  
To action was just one more prompting than  
His daily toil, his loving, his upbringing  
Of children satisfied, his play, his singing?  
And so, at prompting of the yew,  
And calling it divine,  
They found a thing to do.  
Just so that one of them would give a sign—  
One in which human love and woodland met—  
He bent to the water, and made a finger wet,  
And touched his friend's cheek, drawn, pale with  
the fever  
Of the unloved, the unloving, the unseeking lover.

## COLOUR

**H**OW that old wall lives, now the sun  
Is on it, making soft greys show,  
And browns, and faint, faint purples ; lighting moss,  
The little-needle cushions. Let a cloud  
Cover the sun, the drizzling rain begin,  
And all once more is blank and dead—just stone.

Blood-poppies in the corn, though dark clouds lour,  
And rain fall drearily, still trumpet out  
The psalm of rushing colour from glad earth.

You are the wall, Dear ; he, thy friend, the sun.  
Ah, yes, you live, he with his sunny soul  
Being there to make your soft greys show and  
          purples—  
He with his praise of purples and soft greys.

I am the cloud, Dear, and the dreary rain,  
The city-smoked, soot-laden chilling drizzle,  
I, with my body sick, and sick ambition.

Be a blood-poppy in the corn, my Dear.  
Trumpet me psalms of colour from glad earth.  
A lark's voice by and by may answer you.



## BIRDS

**W**ANDERERS are they more than we,  
The winged ones, over earth and sea.  
Once they come, when grass is thin :  
They leave when corn is brought to bin.  
Swift they come, and swift they go.  
Over the hills, over the flow  
Of the Mediterranean deep  
With unresting wings they sweep.

It is the law of all their kind  
To wander, and with ready mind  
The birds obedient scholars are,  
And hear each whisper from afar.  
Therefore they now are on the wing,  
Summoned each one to come and sing  
In English woods that empty were  
Of sound but of the winds astir.

Was there a windy whisper sent  
Over the sea and continent ;  
Of sorrel seen in English woods,  
And daffodilies opening hoods ;

A reed-pipe spreading news of thaw,  
And bramble soon and hip and haw ;  
That hedges were no longer bare,  
Nor water frozen anywhere ?

There is for me an equal law,  
With limb for wing and foot for claw.  
I am as native at nature's knee  
As bird in air or fish in sea.  
I have a nest to build as well,  
And some to feed, and know no hell ;  
And know no heaven, or it is near ;  
It is not over the sea, but here.

## CARE-FREE

O little bird, sing on.  
My heart is free.  
Gone are the days of sorrow, and gone  
The thoughts that, like a sea  
Surging with hoarse and billowy swell,  
Now ebbd and stilled,  
Once all my lone heart filled,  
And strewed my life with ruin of weed and shell.

O little bird, sing on.  
Thy heart is free.  
Gone are the days of summer, and gone  
Thy little ones from thee.  
They flew from the nest and sheltering eaves,  
With wings abreast,  
And now afar they rest,  
And fill their song with murmur of wind and leaves.

## THE VOICELESS

PLACES that I have trodden with my feet—  
An alpine forest, snow-bound, silent, frozen ;  
A pool, brown water, beech trees, and the Prosen—  
Here as I walk this hot Calcutta street,  
Thinking of them, is made a bar  
Around me, as of peace and strength  
And silence islanding a star.

## THE BIRCH TREE

**I**T was a maiden, sure, too white  
For man to uncover to his sight,  
And so Pan touched her, and she grew a birch.  
Those were her finger tips,  
Where the raindrop slips :  
The leaves in the air  
Once were all sunny hair.

## AUTUMN

Now it is autumn time the woods  
Are full of robin song—  
Little snatches soon repeated.  
The Elves listen, seated  
Under the damp, brown toadstool hoods.

## BULBUL

**R**ED-VENTED, white-cheeked Bulbul, crested,  
Piping few notes, bell-like, musical,  
Likest to his, the loved Red-breasted,  
Now I have watched thee among the rushes,  
Home I, happy in thee, and rested.

SHAMA'A

**B**LACK-HEADED, brown-breasted  
Shama'a for whistling.









## LOVE

**M**EN may love children, and yet never know  
Their souls' soul till God give them of their own :  
Men love ripe corn in autumn, but if sown  
With their own hands, and if they watch it grow—  
You think not ? Nay, I feel it must be so,  
And just a moment, but again it's gone,  
I saw the infinite love pour down upon  
The creatures whom God knoweth, as none know  
Even their children. A moment, one, all things  
Were close to me, all, even to the bird  
Singing in far off alp unseen, unheard ;  
Even to its grass and stones. It seemed my hands  
Had made them all—the swelling throat that sings,  
The seeds that fall, the grey stone's crumbled sands.

## DEATH

### I.

'TIS after-eve : that is Arcturus setting :  
Yonder the Himalayan snows uplift  
The eternal purity above the drift  
Of cloud, and for an hour is peace from fretting.  
Down in the valley a lonely bird is calling—  
Down in the valley where the trees are lost  
To something in the dusk like dark hoar-frost.  
On the hill-side, and faster night is falling.

O God, who made the silence and the beauty,  
And heart of man for it to touch and fill,  
Whence cometh too this awful lust to kill,  
At call of conscience and dictate of duty.  
What unclean things with love of one's own kind  
At the dark roots of life are fast entwined ?

## II

Here seemeth it like an eternal peace  
Spread by God's hands within the encircling  
hills,

And yet each hour, each moment, a creature kills  
After his kind, and that will never cease.  
If in this new Gethsemane He stood,  
All in an agony of thought and prayer,  
And stayed the thing, would each be filled, as where,  
By the lake-side, He fed the multitude ?

It needs must be that death, which in the plan  
Of all created things is integral,  
Has in its being something to annul  
For God the sorrow that it is for man.  
Then let us hence in trust that what we see  
Is a true image of the peace to be.

## PROPHETS

**W**AS it more certain that a man be known  
For prophet—from Beersheba unto Dan—  
When all a race, secluded, lived alone,  
And all a people made a little clan ?  
When few could tell unto what other doors  
The hill tracks led, or if the pathless sea,  
That left the beach, went on to other shores,  
Or stretched for ever, uncontrolled and free.  
Beyond the twilight of the world, to grey  
And voiceless wastes of water, where the steep  
Path of the sun is hid at close of day,  
And homeless stars are shepherded like sheep  
That gather in the fold, till morning dawns  
To scatter them about the upland lawns ?

## INDIA

**T**HREE hundred millions breathing, and not one  
To leave a name, or dictate of his will,  
Clear voiced, for children's children to fulfil;  
But be forgotten all: remembered none!  
Thus now, and ever while the ages run,  
Millions of beings rise, and strive, and pass  
Like morning dew upon the summer grass,  
And yet have nobly suffered, nobly done.  
Or it may be, before his beard is grown,  
That one will leap into a Titan's throne  
By huge success in mind or war, and be  
Deathless until the final trump is blown.  
A Buddha or a Rama, and no sea  
Of time prevail to drown his memory.



## THE SPRING-CHILD

**W**HEN April comes the Spring-Child does  
not say :

"My days, each year, have end in winter drear :  
My flowers all fade, and every leaf turns sere :  
The frosts come and the snows, and hide away  
My meadows. I will keep my maidenhood  
From fields so full of ghostly, misty fear."  
No ! 'Tis again as when God made the year  
Her bare feet flash in every budded wood.  
So, in three days, to make my darling feel  
Nothing of me as old, no kiss, no lure ;  
No circling arms, no whisper of her name ;  
Nothing as common, nothing stale and poor ;  
To make her feel herself a rosy flame,  
And hear the wood-bells ring a marriage peal.

## THE ALIEN

### 1

**H**OW deep the love of any land must be  
For poets to be heard in it this shows,  
That I, in whom the love of England rose  
To singing, when I came across the sea  
To India, saw and loved the land, but knew  
That I a stranger was, and could not be  
As one who learned his speech at the Mother's knee,  
Revealer thence of what makes man's word true.  
For never only the things seen by the eye,  
Or that the ear heard, are what stir the heart  
Of men : but what those in the darkling womb  
Grow to of song. Shapes, sounds there fall and die ;  
The scales drop off to show the hidden part.  
I saw my stranger-poem a gaudy tomb.

## 2

So in an ode I pleaded that one should be  
Interpreter of what the fields and sky,  
The colour of things, the flight of birds, their cry.  
Say to an ear tuned to a deeper key.  
"Come Indian child," I said, "and speak to me.  
This is no temple where thy feet were stayed  
Outside, as mine at the carved fane they made  
With hands, lonely, beside the stretch of sea."  
In books of Toru Datta and Tagore  
Is love of Indian land; but never has one  
Into whose face I looked revealed to me  
Aught of the thing that bamboo grove, or sun  
Lighting the paddy, has for him of more  
Than common day—of what a Keats would see.

## 3

It is too shy a thing for them to say  
To any stranger. It is too deep a thing  
For any language but their own to sing  
To them. They are men—they do not wish to pay  
Homage to alien for a golden lay  
Of Ind. I hear their dumb thought :—"Leave the  
breast  
Of India for our heads to seek, and pressed  
On it to find warmth there. For you it is clay".  
It is not clay for me ; but I turn my face  
To other shores. I would not wrong a blade  
Of Indian grass. It is a holy place.  
I tread it with my feet : but they are made  
Tender as Radha's breast, and all I see  
Is a hushed secret between her and me.

## TRAVEL IN INDIA

AND once we passed a river, which in the blest  
Sunshine was blue, and the blue fields were rare,  
Of blossoming flax. The wheat, with which no tare  
Uppgrew, was softly green. "Ah ! I could rest  
Happily there", I said, feeling the best  
Awake in me, from under heavy care :  
"If I could be a pilgrim wandering there,  
Until death came upon my lids down-pressed :  
A wanderer in India, till the stain  
That Europe gives in all her darkened towns,  
From doubt, contention, and the weary pain  
That throbs beneath her surplices and gowns,  
Should melt under the sunshine and the rain,  
Amid those kindly blues and greens and browns".

## A DEDICATION

**T**HERE is a flower called Star of Bethlehem.  
I have not seen it, but I think I know  
How in a purer world that flower would grow  
And I would make it dedicate to them,  
Dorothy, Zita, Eileen, who, when thought  
Still was of shepherds coming to the manger.  
Treated me not as unregarded stranger.  
But gladly gave the friendship that I sought :  
But, since man may not dedicate a flower  
Of God, be theirs this winter bloom of song,  
Written near Bethlehem in one strong hour  
Of hope for the too darkened soul of man :  
Seeing them so, I ask : May not the wrong  
Die from the race even within Time's span ?

## CHILDHOOD'S FIRMAMENT

**F**OR all the beauty of the firmament  
Of childhood's years—arched heaven, and wonder-blue,  
And the strange, patterned stars, and all the new  
Moons that were handleless, silver sickles, bent—  
For those I had, and have, a heart content,  
Though I have many sorrows, and the charm  
Might in dark days and sad have taken harm ;  
But close within my heart it was up-pent.  
I have still greater treasures than those years  
Had presage of—so many that the count  
Exceeds the power to marshall and to tell.  
My eyes have seen, though often dim with tears,  
New things to be from a diviner fount,  
And once I heard a far, unearthly bell.

## FAINT-HEART

**A** little while we all together go,  
When life is young, and hearts are glad and free  
As wild white birds whose voice is to the sea  
A music set above the ebb and flow.  
We hear, and in our hearts the echo know,  
And follow, follow—but the bird is flown,  
By the wild winds into the tempest blown,  
And we are wingless, and our footsteps slow.  
O bird of ocean, fierce, intrepid, free,  
Why did such children choose thee for their guide ?  
Thou lovest the tempest's tumult, but dare we  
The desolation's wrath and wrack abide ?  
We seek some rest of quiet beach to win,  
To breathe awhile before new toils begin.



## UNDOING

**T**HE world is old : much is the thought that men  
Have given to human duty, human things,  
Seeking to lay strong bases ; but day brings  
New men, and what was written with the pen  
But yesterday is all that lives for them :  
The older is a page now dim and blurred ;  
The style is strange, the wisdom is not heard :  
So flows a tide of folly none can stem.  
The pregnant page of warning and command  
Becomes a place for hunting up and down.  
"Who was this fellow mentioned here ?" "This shows  
Interpolation by a later hand".  
"It does not !" So the professors come to blows,  
And it is all the talk of half the town.

## INSPIRATION

**W**E sojourn in a world too dark with care,  
So, if in bitterness a plaint you sing,  
The world will give you back a questioning stare.  
Oh, do not to their sorrows sorrow bring !  
Oh, do not more their maddened passions heat,  
But sprinkle on their brows refreshing rain,  
You who could listen to the inward beat  
Of this cool earth that knows not care or pain !  
Therefore, for inspiration of this song  
I take the gladness of the innocent soul ;  
And will not stay where darkling spirits throng,  
But o'er their grave a mighty stone would roll ;  
In hope that there may be one tear the less,  
That one glad heart my own glad heart may bless.

## WORK

**F**ORGIVE me this. There's work that from the deep  
Spirit of life lies far as dreams ; and it  
As little counts to temper souls as sleep ;  
As little feeds the mind as something writ  
In three words, which a parrot might repeat,  
A million times repeated. You, poor clerk,  
I pity ; I, poor clerk that was, entreat  
The gods to lead you soon from that dead, dark,  
And dreary world. And if a man be poor,  
And have no more than poetry to show  
To prove his gift—yet gift it is as sure  
As any—poor, degreeless, he must go  
And clerk it for a living. Many years  
I eat that bread, and salted it with tears.

## GOVERNMENT

**F**ORGIVE, too, if I say there might have more  
Been given me to do. Work still is here  
In India, where all changes, to the core  
Nearer, and fitter for my hands. You fear  
To trust great things to a mere poet? Dread  
His bungling? With more sense than *that* you choose  
Your public men? You do so? It is said  
No people is more careless, and you lose  
The character your fathers had, the respect  
Of India—with your Hardinge and your Duff;  
You with your Gorsts and Birrells! Your defect  
Precisely is that not one-tenth enough  
You care who governs you, and at a mess  
You rage, then lapse again to carelessness.

## MILITARISM

NOT righteous for they make themselves a law  
Not paralleled in heaven. They take for creed  
To sate each red-raw, devastating greed  
With worship of bare tooth and sharpened claw.  
They seek to blanch the human face with awe,  
When handless, piteous children's arm-stumps bleed.  
Oh, that some Dante, with iron hands, would feed  
The brute, cramming the dung-stuff down its maw.  
Poor fools, poor fools, we dance and sing, and play  
Each peace-time. Boys go kissing. Maids are wed.  
While in lone chambers old men, ashy-grey,  
Plot the next monster hell will bring to bed.  
We dress it up, a pretty thing to see.  
We play fine music, marching happily.

## THE RIGHTS OF NATIONS

**R**ESPECT the rights of nations ! Let that be.  
But there are rights of men, and they should not  
Forgotten be. One is to hate to see  
A fair, rich land misruled, and made a blot  
Upon the face of earth, with ruin, strife  
Anarchy there. What if some greed move, too,  
The conqueror? Is aught quite pure in life?  
Have you an alchemy to make men new?  
So you who now the generations make  
Count not too much on man's forbearance. Deep  
In human nature is the will to take  
And use what others are too weak to keep.  
Know you so sure, too, that it's not God's will  
That others should take and use what you use ill?

## THE PROUDER SPIRIT

**W**HO are those bondage spirits whom the chains  
Of fate and heavy circumstances bind ?  
Know they no promptings of immortal kind,  
But still are bowed and racked beneath their pains ?  
Go tell them that the prouder spirit disdains  
Ever to moan in darkness and to sweat ;  
He is too straight from Heaven to forget  
His heritage on earth and glorious gains.  
A moment and he was not—then the dark  
Was troubled, and to breath a shape was given  
For battle and for victory: and hark !  
The songs of life break through the curtain riven !  
Worlds after worlds flash to his inmost ken,  
And pleasant are the gaudy haunts of men !







## THE GOSPEL OF SPIRIT

**T**HE grave—if we were sure it was the end,  
And beyond it there stood not any friend  
    To ask: Did we control  
    The world, and make the soul  
Master, though in a house so little known?  
    Then should we moan  
At ease to have lived so long; to know no more  
Than human love behind a still-shut door.

Only to grow as rooted cowslips grow,  
And then to die away, and never know  
    Desire for more than rain  
    After the warmth, and pain  
Of dying in the autumn dark and cold:  
    Never to hold  
The end in vision, morning after night,  
The spirit's release, the time-free, arrowy flight,

## ECCLESIA

**THE** spirit moveth me to-night to consider.  
Light is light, but clouds are dark and hide it.  
Clouds have gathered again: the light has vanished  
For nine parts of mankind. Only a remnant  
Hears the gospel. Faint grow the words and fainter.

Our Father, which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name.  
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done,  
In earth as it is in heaven.

Let us go back two thousand years. The world  
Is old: Christ not yet born, but there are cradles,  
Reed-made, wicker cradles, in which Peter,  
John, Mary Magdalene, Martha, Mary, Lazarus,  
The Baptist, Philip, others, to old folk-music  
Will rock to sleep. A little, and they will listen  
To one who spoke as never yet man spoke,  
But will not turn away, saying "Incredible!  
This thing he says." "The Father—who is the Father?"

"Righteousness—what may it be ?" "Heaven—where's heaven ?"

So then, if it be sensible to think  
That Man rose from some cousinship with ape,  
Himself a worm once, here is seen to be,  
Here in this common sympathy with Christ,  
A notable thing—one worthy, in a world  
In which the common house-fly has a book  
Written about it, all serious men's attention.

Or go back further still, back to Elkanah,  
Wedded to two, Penninah and barren Hannah.  
Lo, unto Hannah a little son is born,  
And Hannah in her gladness sings : "There is  
None holy as the Lord. He maketh poor.  
He maketh rich. He raiseth up the poor.  
Out of the dust he lifteth up the beggar.  
His saints' feet he will keep; the wicked  
In darkness shall be silent"—notable words,  
Arguing cousinship with the divine, if certain  
The kinship with the ape.

So man had searched,  
There in the world, or deep in his own spirit,  
And had brought home those sheaves.

Then David, psalmist,  
Singing alone, easing a heart full, sang  
Such words as: "Turn our captivity, O Lord,  
As the rivers in the south." "Except the Lord  
Do build the house, their labour is but lost  
That build it." "Except the Lord do keep the city,  
The watchman waketh but in vain."  
"He maketh him households like a flock of sheep."  
"He knoweth whereof we are made:  
He remembereth that we are but dust."

Aye, but the dust at least had found a voice;  
Had learned to speak of loveliness, holiness.  
At evening, in the twilight, in the garden,  
God seemed to walk. In the dust's mouth were words  
Beautiful, as *gospel*, *peace*. Dust hated—  
Not always, but now and then—greed and corruption,  
Filth, blasphemy, abomination. Dust abhorred—  
Even *abhorred*, having a strange, fierce passion—  
The ways of the wicked; built him arks to shield him,  
Of wood or of spirit, from the contamination.  
Truly a long way for dust to have come already.

Suppose now that a man comes, one who speaks  
As never yet man spoke; but yet a man,  
No more divine than you are, or than I am,  
But *as* divine, being in a world he made not;  
Made not himself of self-producing matter:

Having a dim-divined, strange, unknown origin—  
Suppose he comes, teaching, and others listen—  
Beautiful souls they too, as might be likely,  
As born of a race during long centuries nurtured  
Among God's lilies; sung to by Hannahs, Davids,  
Ruddy, and having beautiful faces, and singers—  
Suppose, then, that to that man others listen.

Now, could he speak as never yet man spoke,  
Being no more divine than you or I ?  
Easily. Sundry men write sonnets, dramas;  
They are admired ; but presently comes Shakespeare;  
He at the same thing looks; writes the same language  
But such as stars his sonnets, clay all others.  
What thing it is *he* sees, knows, and so utters.  
Other men see each image blurred with another ;  
Nothing defined and sharp, and so see nothing—  
So comes this man, teaching, and all men marvel.

Then suppose sundry hide-bound, prosperous creatures,  
Buttressed high in their own esteem, with faces  
Such as the curious eye may pick out quickly  
Anywhere in the world where men are wealthy—  
Suppose they take this teacher one dread Friday,  
And crucify him, and so once more a riddance.

Suddenly in the hearts of his disciples—  
Beautiful souls they too, and poor and simple;  
Nearer the ears of corn, and birds, and lilies,  
As farthest from all pomp and power—suddenly  
Flames in their hearts the passionate, great conviction  
That the dead Master other men transcended :  
The word he spoke alone the word that mattered.

What his word? "Be righteous—naught else matters."  
And he made it forthwith plain to children—  
But to children only—that if each one  
Loved his neighbour as himself, then that one  
Was a righteous man. A rule to follow.

And some followed—sure a Paul would listen—  
And some followed, and God's peace descended  
To their hearts; and when some scribe had written  
All the story down, in quiet cloister  
First this man would think to add this marvel;  
Then this other to add this other marvel,  
Ever led still farther on and farther;  
But forgetting meanwhile to be righteous;  
Lost, a child, in beautiful day-dreaming—  
I, at least, do think that would be likely.

Then into the quiet cloister cometh  
One not such a dreamer, and he sayeth :  
"Tell me now the story ; tell it truly.  
All cannot be true I find here written."  
"All is true !" they tell him. "Did our fathers  
Tell the story not as here it's written ?  
Take one line away, and it all crumbles ;  
The temple crumbles that our fathers builded."  
So they talk, forgetting to be righteous.

Then the men outside the cloister hear it—  
How the Master was from heaven descended  
Unto earth to bring peace and glad tidings  
Unto men—whence presently more questions ;  
Thence theology soon more compacted ;  
For when with thing that's doubtful, dark, improbable—  
Remember that all this is but supposing—  
You meet mankind, men being critical,  
Needs be that you be proof at every point  
Against their questions ; and to make theology,  
Being so arduous, tendeth to forgetting  
Of any simple precept to be righteous.

For one says : "But how from heaven descended,  
And then crucified ?" And straight the answer :  
"God, even God himself, came to atone for  
The sins of the world." Whence presently disputing :  
"Isn't vicarious punishment immoral ?"  
So the more forgetting to be righteous.



Now the Christ is preached all the world over.  
All the folk within the fold are gathered.  
Cathedrals have been built, and parish churches,  
Hospitals, alms-houses, goods and chattels,  
With still more forgetting to be righteous.

But much more theology's compacted.  
For the church must have an answer ready—  
Though Christ said: "Be righteous," and that only—  
Case a man should ask an awkward question  
If a planet's course be found implying—  
What? or be it only fly's leg-rubbing,  
Straight must be an answer; for man's loving  
Of his neighbour and the sun's uprising—  
These have now been found to hang together.  
If the last be not as Pope supposed, the other  
Clearly can't be done as Christian precept.

Then the wrangling becomes never-ending.  
Who can hear: "Love God, and love your neighbour,"  
While the din is loud and never-ceasing?  
Let a Darwin think he had discovered  
How plants came and animals developed,  
Though it make you, John, no less his neighbour,  
Or you, Mary, up the Bishop standeth;  
Sayeth: "Be that true, then the glad tidings  
Can no more be preached. Burn Darwin quickly."

But an after-Bishop says; "Did Darwin  
Find it out? Fudge! Aristotle knew it."

Then is much forgetting to be righteous.

So I add my quota to the wrangling.  
Yes, the Christ is even, John and Mary,  
Very God of very God, Begotten,  
Never made. But know the fundamental  
Is the thing the dim dust might have spoken—  
One by any carpenter engendered;  
One, a man, the breath in him the spirit;  
Of a dim-divined, strange, unknown origin;  
One who, speaking with that voice and gesture,  
Speaking while the corn and lilies rustled,  
Said: "Oh, learn of me; be meek and holy."

## THE DIVINE

**M**ANIANAC, drunkard, slut,  
There's poetry in you; but,  
If I fill my page with you,  
And the slime that oozes through  
Cesspool wall and kitchen sink,  
In the fashion some people think  
So brave—if I should stand before  
The eyes of God, at some great door  
Into eternity, and hear the crash  
Of ultimate music, then the worm  
Of my sensation-seeking word,  
Remembered there in flash on flash  
Of Revelation pure, would squirm,  
Horribly sick, as suns were heard  
Giving their souls up.

As the sea  
Is salt to keep the earth sweet, so to me  
Poetry is. What if the time is long  
Before the crooked, the slimey, and the wrong

Wither before the purity of song?  
What if the day of awe  
At beauty shown as the enduring law  
It still far off? Let one more finger draw  
Music, if faint, from the stretched string  
'Twixt man and God: let one more bring,  
Pale with the sweat of seeking, a leaf broken  
In a new vineyard hither, as a token  
Of what would be, if some great angel bore,  
Through the hushed streets, a purer Grail,  
And mania shrank from the now sweetened core  
Of human nature, and Drink became hill-water.  
And woman no more was frail,  
Nor man a satyr, lusting for earth's daughter.

Fool, it is easier far to make flesh creep,  
And souls shrink—as to go where women weep  
Over the wilted, withered, spotted thing we bring,  
Calling it love. Easy to make hearts wring  
With anguish for Desdemona or for Lear,  
Put this time by a Gissing in a room  
In a mean street of dirt and smelly gloom,  
Undone this time by destitution, fear,  
Sickness, and hate, not by the strawberry-spotted  
Handkerchief let fall that Iago plotted—  
But try to see some beauty through the rags  
Of beggary, or through the pavement flags,

Where earth is gas-drenched, sewage-drenched, and  
dark,

Through broken brick-dust, cold, quenched embers—

That is not easy; try to make men hark,

And fall down on their knees upon the road—

Not Pauls with flaming hearts, but sleek-souled  
members

Of the Bengal Club—because one spoke, and showed—

I cannot tell you what: my eyes are blind

With sweat of seeking for the thing behind

This passing show. Men sometimes call it God.

## BLACK SHADOW

"BLACK shadow, black shadow, what bringeth thee,  
Silent, each morning, to the altar stair?"

"I am the murk of the cavern  
In which for years thou madst thy lair."

"I know it, black shadow, I know it.  
Try now to climb the altar stair."

"There are massed roses too many,  
And lilies fragrant in goblets there."

## THE LOOM OF GOD

THE loom of God plies swiftly, weaving  
Vesture for man ; and now one stretches out  
A hand, and now another, taking wherewith  
To clothe men's nakedness. But after time  
Vesture wears out, moth-eaten, torn. O man,  
Put off thy blood-stained rags ; for I would clothe  
thee,  
Unto forgetfulness of nakedness,  
In the many-coloured, patterned loveliness  
That this hand takes each hour from the loom of God,  
Being the hand of one who has been *chela*  
To Mozart, Heine, Keats, with ears so stopped  
With honey of paradise as not to hear  
The eternal scold of disagreeable women,  
The blasphemous cursing of half-demented men,  
The grinding and crunching of the devil's mill.

## INNOCENTS

So, was it even so—  
In Bethlehem was heard that woe?  
The divine will  
God did fulfil  
In that determined incarnation,  
Maugre the lamentation  
Foreseen? No mother that had lost  
A babe, but would have said:  
"Better the hope of heaven  
Were dead, were dead, were dead"?  
And every father even?

No. God is that mother, God that father is,  
And will endure  
Even that sorrow, so that sin  
Cease, and the world be pure;  
So that He win  
Mother and father and child at last.



So He was crucified before  
Ever Mary that Child bore?  
For what is time to One  
From whom no thing is hid?  
So He was crucified when men  
From Herod the dread thing hid?

So He was crucified in Bethlehem?  
In hearts of women there and men?  
That sin might cease :  
For so He hateth sin ?

## WORD MUSIC

**T**HE music in some words,  
As *mistletoe* and *holly*—  
Full of love and folly,  
And the laughter of which so empty are  
Names of greater moment far,  
As *fractions*, *sines*, and *surds* :  
And so again I wish that men  
Were childish like the mouse and wren.

And Jesus saith that we  
Must be as children, or not see  
Heaven and the Tree  
Of living, with the flame  
Of blossom on the same ;  
So ever let the stress  
Of hard thought give a dress  
To clothe our nakedness,  
Not all an ashen grey,  
But bright as hawthorn spray,  
Or such as Jesus blessed,  
The Robin Redbreast's breast.

## HOSPITALITY AND WAR

**G**IVE me not bread to eat.  
Nor wine to drink.  
Help me instead to beat  
Down the flames that wink  
Out of the earth around  
The feet of humankind—  
The little tongues of fire,  
Licking, without a sound,  
Till in a fury, blind,  
Crested, leaping the pyre,  
They hiss, and ruin, and rave  
In wind-blown wave on wave.

## SAINT AND SINNER

**S**TOP now ! There are things you overlook.  
It may be as you say ; but I have doubts.  
Consider this.

You cite that man, a good man, but not good  
As Francis was. Then your assumption is  
That the best life of all is when the soul,  
Surrendered to Christ, takes up the Cross, and lives  
Thenceforward serving others—by which you mean  
Serving those others in particular ways.  
But of that presently.

That man you cite,  
Suppose, when young, he had joined a Brotherhood.  
Men would have cared for him ; fed him and  
clothed him ;  
Simply, but so it was no care of his.  
He would have moved about the altar, seeing  
Beautiful things, and hearing them—much music,  
Litanies sung, beautiful rhapsodies read,  
Psalms chanted. Should he go among the sick

To pray, the sick are not his flesh and blood ;  
He prays, in words that are charged with loveliness—  
"Where two or three are gathered together"—so there,  
As by the altar, with no care, and shepherded  
As sheep with precious fleece. Suppose he washes  
A leper's body, he takes no harm from that.  
How should he, he whose care-free mind  
Nightly lies down with body for deep sleep ?  
Not that you understand how body's strength  
Grows with such sleep.

"His mind would be full of care".

Then he must have a strange soul, not to fall  
Into the rhythm of beauty !

But he married.

Joined not a Brotherhood, but married a girl.  
Went daily to earn his living in some den  
Of noise, and dirt, and stupidity, and sin.  
All dens are full enough of that. Each evening  
Returned with the thought that something might be  
wrong

At home—a child fallen sick, or dead.  
Always, or almost always, one child dies.  
Then he may say, in a later year ; "If Johnny  
Had *not* died, how we'd have managed I don't know.  
The others cost so much !" How long had he borne

Such fears in his mind as that, if he should die,  
There'd only be so much for his wife to bring  
The children up on ? But you, childless man,  
However make *you* know the difference  
Between care for acquaintance and care for one's  
own blood ?

However make you know, you unmarried man,  
Anything really ?

Do you know how easily hurt  
A woman is ? They are different from us men.  
Do you know the shame it is for a man to hurt  
The girl he remembers loving that first time  
He ever saw her ? Do you know the pain to a man  
In the coming of the common day again ?

Take a simple thing—the simplest things tell most.  
A man and a maid, and let her borrow pencil  
From him ; then forget it's his, and put it  
In her own pocket. He'll say : "You may keep  
my pencil !"  
And in their laughter there is happiness  
Not till then dreamt of. Why ? Because she's  
virginal.

It's all to come. Emotion such as that  
Must die down—it would kill the body else.  
And to a man it is all a horrible pain ;  
Worse, since he cannot speak of it to her,  
Or anyone.

So Father,  
If when our man is old, he's somewhat roughened,  
Body and soul—not to compare with Francis ;  
If *his* life-history could not once be praised  
By holy men as much as his, the Saint's—  
But still you may be right !

Only I'd like  
No doubt to be about it, ere I'd wish  
My son to join a Brotherhood. And why ?

Who feed us, clothe us, we who preach and teach,  
Doctor men, make their laws, write books, or print  
them ?

Do anything in fact that is no addition  
To food or clothing, or other of the necessities  
Of life ? Those who produce food, clothing.  
And what we take means so much less for them.  
So, seeing there are so many of us already—  
Preachers and teachers, doctors, soldiers, sailors,  
Policemen, publishers—but the list is endless ;  
Seeing that the world thinks all of these are  
necessary—

They are not, but the world is very stupid—  
I'd hesitate, before I gave approval  
To any setting up of saint profession.

I prefer saints who grow corn or make clothing.

## THE DOVE

**M**OTHER, there is a Dove in heaven.  
Its flights to earth are one to seven;  
That crooked ways may be made all even.

To-morrow's flight will make up seven;  
So give me to eat bread without leaven,  
And tell me the tale of the Star in heaven.

Locusts and honey wild to eat  
Are John the Baptist's only meat:  
Shaggy his head and bare his feet.

The wheat and the tares in one a-sowing;  
A Garden dark and a Yew-tree growing;  
And an ancient debt to Heaven still owing.

Man born of woman, soon thy peace  
Will cover thy shoulders like a fleece,  
Golden, and that will be my peace.



## THE TRUTH THAT SETS US FREE

**SPIRIT** is, Love is—and nothing else besides.  
Sickness and sin beat round in endless tides.  
Who shall deliver thee, man, on the waters walking?  
“Ere Abraham was, I am”—that word abides.

## THE BUNGLER

**GET** thee a new heart, O thou world of sorrow,  
Clouds are dark, but look thou thorough.  
Misery is man's own making;  
Destitution, sobs, heart-breaking;  
Man, to whom give any thing,  
Holy Grail, or angel's wing,  
And he straight a way will make  
Cup to soil and wing to break.

## LIGHT

**A** thing is done that you  
Never, never could do.  
The apple is made to grow  
Red, that would else be white:  
Yea, even as snow,  
If sun never gave his light.

## RESIGNATION

**I**N a world so dark,  
Amid ways so foul,  
Soon to lie stark,  
With the staring owl  
To hoot our knell,  
Are ill and well  
Not more or less  
Of nothingness?

## WITHIN

**M**ADE man to beat with other hearts  
And touch, and hunger still for more,  
Seeking a part in many parts,  
But separated at the core ;

Then daily, in that place reserved,  
Create creation—should we find  
God's image, attributes preserved  
In fractioned fraction of a mind?

## FROST-BOUND

**T**HE human heart tight round with bands  
It ties, and the tongue half-dumb  
It shuts behind clenched teeth, and hands  
Strangle the thoughts that come;  
And all God's flowers that bloom grow so,  
Warmed by the driving sleet and snow.

## RESIGNATION

**R**EST weary spirit: cometh night,  
And dark, and open doors, and flight.  
Need there be more, so near thy knelling,  
O'er leaden letters broken spelling?  
One with a flute and silver bell  
Cometh, and word of what to tell.

## FEAR

**I**T is the dawn: my heart is cold.  
Over and over its fears are told  
In my untenanted, unshuttered soul.



## SYMPATHY

**I** have been thinking all this autumn day  
Of a rare sympathy a woman has;  
The rarest I have known.

When, in the field,  
A hunter has to turn, to escape death,  
Before his mind can consciously take in  
The danger, whence and what—if he does turn  
Within the fractioned second allowed, and lives,  
It is by virtue of an instinctive motor  
Moving his muscles. So quick is her sympathy.  
Present her with a human soul—in joy,  
Happiness, pleasure, misery, remorse;  
Telling the truth or lying; speaking sense  
Or nonsense; serious or humbugging her—  
Instantly her heart beats so in tune—  
The required fraction either quicker or slower  
That her brain on the instant comprehends.  
I have not known a sympathy so marvellous.  
It is akin to genius—Shakespeare's, Lamb's.

So all this autumn day, for her the divine  
Second or third that brings her marriage on,  
And because something of her gladness fills  
My soul too, and because of the quick sense  
Felt often of sympathy with her (her soul  
Being an essence making hearts like hers ;  
So making mine)—I have this autumn day  
Filled all my thought with joy in her sympathy.

## LONGING

**N**OW, when I see a girl,  
And long for her, I know  
She doth but stir a longing  
Of long ago.

A longing buried in me  
In a far-off childhood day :  
It wakes and aches, but shortly  
It will away.

So, when I long for meadows  
Where English roses blow,  
It is the same old longing  
Of long ago.

In my unseen self it is buried.  
It stirs at all that's seen ;  
But when it is gone, I shall  
I, too, serene.

So, only so, were the sages  
Serene. They put their trust  
In God, and their unseen longing  
Changed to dust ;

And a summer wind came passing,  
And blew it out of their soul,  
And, serene, they went on marching  
Unto their goal.

## AGE

**T**HE brain of a man  
May be old as old,  
As old as Merlin.

His heart is not old ;  
His heart is young.

So much that is told  
With a ready tongue,  
Though wise in its seeming,  
Is child-man dreaming  
In the land of Nod.

## DEATH

**H**OW thick the leaves are ;  
How heavy the sands lie.  
So many men afar,  
So many near, to die :  
So many dead : so many more to be born.

How could man make so bold  
As to claim of God,  
That He remember him cold.  
Buried beneath the sod ?  
Living, he shared the earth with the ears of corn

## LIFE

**L**IFE that Shakespeare disdained,  
Thing of Baudelaire's hating—  
Had they my children gained ?  
Known my mating ?

Cannot each common man  
Say as much ?  
Brats and a lass—God's plan  
In sight and touch.

## PRIEST AND SCIENTIST

PRIEST

**W**HEN, Scientist, you blame this clod  
For speaking certainly of God,  
Consider this, that He is known,  
No transient thing, and He alone  
Possibly, after His own kind ;  
Seen, therefore, even by the blind.

Christ spoke certainly of God—

SCIENTIST

He was only another clod.



## BANSBERIA TEMPLE

ONE who had seen Bansberia *raj* cut down  
By stronger neighbour, and had sought in vain  
Justice at home, must forth to London town,  
And seek it there, Cornwallis said. So pain  
First was his lot ; for how such vast expense  
(Only to tell a just man of one's plaint,  
Only to speak out that which common sense  
May judge of—why only with so much taint  
Of fees extortionate can that be done ?)  
Was he to meet ? He knew. "Let me," he said,  
"Go live at Kashi till the seventh year's sun  
Ripens my paddy ; let me make my bed  
So long among the beggars ; let seven years'  
Revenue be stored up." So forth he sailed  
To holy Kashi ; there abode ; no tears  
Dimming his eyes ; no murmur, nothing wailed.

And then a wonder. Kashi sang to him  
No song of earth sun-kissed at dawn, and dim  
At evening ; one of birth, and growth, and death,  
And change, and fleeting as the mist that breath  
Leaves on the glass : but of a *tantra* true,

Ever-abiding. So his passion grew  
Still for enlightenment—until it came.  
Then what was gain worth ? Let it feed the flame.  
Let others plead and wrangle, pay their cash.  
He had seen something greater—in a flash,  
In flash on flash had the eternal been  
Shown to his soul. Henceforth would truth be queen  
Of all his steps. He cried : "Let what be done  
Be worthy." And then set the seventh year's sun.

What did he do ? He built a temple. Still  
It stands, and I have seen it ; but too ill  
Would words of mine describe it. Inside, out,  
Silent on earth, in pinnacled air a shout,  
It doth reveal what to the initiate  
Figures pure thought. So unto them a gate  
Is opened to deliverance. I outside,  
Alien but not unmoved, untouched, abide.



# 4

## PLAY-POEMS



## LOVE IN AGE

*"I would have  
Some claim upon thee, if I could,  
Though but of common neighbourhood.  
What joy to hear thee, and to see '  
Thy elder brother I would be.  
Thy father—anything to thee."  
Wordsworth.*

### 1

Come Sea, and wash my sweetheart's feet.  
Since I am old and worn and grey,  
I may not kiss them, but you may,  
Being still young and blue and fleet.

If the sea was old as Eld is old,  
Wrinkled over with brine and age,  
'Then it would make her cold as cold,  
And buffet her in sullen rage ;

But the sea is young and blue, and plays  
With amber and coral and red-fringed weeds  
And rock-pool flowers and white pearl seeds  
In ways like her own maiden ways.

## 2

Come stars, and kiss my sweetheart's eyes.  
Since in the path is that sweet face,  
Do not through interstellar space  
Send your light wandering till it dies.

My lamp burns low, and there below  
The stars are set. The way is yet  
But little : let her light shine bright  
For my remembrance where I go.

In and out, over and under,  
Making for her a world that glistens  
Of sea and starshine, beauty and wonder,  
Alone, where only my spirit listens.

## 3

Not thus the full heart's perfect ease.  
So birds come near but never nearer .  
If they would perch on hands and knees,  
And sing, and make more glad the hearer !

Thus never, Child. So in my mind  
I make a world that is more kind.  
There beast and bird play at our knees  
Under the shadow of great trees.

There is no further need of word  
From man to maid, or maid to bird.  
All the unspoken is understood  
In no more spirit-solitude.

There is no night, for of that sheet  
Is made a pavement for our feet,  
All wondrous small, and bright as day.  
With pattern of the Milky Way.

There is no winter more: the cold  
And ice and snow away are rolled.  
The East is heaped up for a feast.  
The West is smoothed out for a rest.

## 4

Suddenly comes a stop, a cry.  
There is no maid beneath the trees.  
There are no bright eyes shining by.  
There is no head upon my knees.

Sea, hast thou taken her to thee ?  
Stars, is she hid behind the bars ?  
East, hast thou led her like a priest ?  
West, hast thou laid her down to rest ?

Lay me instead, since I am sad  
And grey, and tuned to listen still,  
Stone-like, to star-song making glad  
The pilgrim after the long hill.



Leave her on earth, since she is bright ;  
Weave for her dawn and noon and night,  
When all the stars to time repeat,  
While the heaven unrolls his sheet.

## 5

Some souls are as the seeds they sow  
In long-tilled fields. Others unfold  
Where the winds blow them and they grow.  
Their fruit is never reaped and sold.

Which seed art thou ? I am no field,  
Safe-hedged, to guard thee. Where the rose  
Blows not I bed ; where heather grows,  
The mountain ash and prickly shield.

Too far ? You bed among the wheat ?  
The bearded corn brushes your knees ?  
In lowland streams you wash your feet  
Under the shadow of great trees ?

## 6

There is a way, if you can fare  
So far—past verb and noun, the known,  
Where souls are half-shut-in, alone,  
And breathe only the common air.

Towered on a pinnacle of thought,  
A soul can have its full desire ;  
Every forbidding burned to naught  
Below, in the rough tides of fire.

## 7

From earth we come, to earth we draw.  
But spirit is a flame and leaps ;  
So, double-minded, the mind keeps  
Changing, and chafes at any law.

By this brown heather, by this brown stream  
On me, half-happy, there intrudes  
The thought, as in a broken dream.  
Of Indian seas, of soft green woods.

So this new love comes breaking in :  
This Spring in age, these answerings  
To two young hands, knowing no sin,  
Held out—this later blossoming's.

To turn it into song in me  
Of star and maid, of maid and sea;  
To let it beat but in my mind,  
And in my body to be blind.

So should the force with light be lit,  
As if the stars all shone on it :  
It should be bright, as if the blue  
Tides of the sea preserved it new.

## 8

So, later Blossoming, keep you  
To the safe hedges and the dew.  
I will fare on, but to my feet  
Will ring your name-song, clear and sweet.

## AN OLD MAN'S PRAYER

**T**HROUGH hells into a deeper hell to go—  
That was my lot to me, and women's were  
The eyes that made the dark doors open so;  
That now I would not lift a hand, or stir  
A foot for one again; but song is still  
Blossom in valleys, trumpets on the hill.

Dante does not betray me, Shakespeare stands  
Still with the same deep smile, and Milton's hymn  
Makes faster beat the pulses, and the hands  
Of Wordsworth, Keats, and Shelley, in the dim  
Dusk of my age, hold up a lamp to light  
Me more than stars irradiate the night.

Now when my soul is cleansed of what forbade  
The happiness for me that others win,  
The secrets of all things will make me glad,  
Revealed, and, in the temple come within,  
I shall be ready, standing at the door,  
To open to them, having gone before.

And then no more to be a man, God grant,  
And different in kind from other things :  
Still for the perfect knowledge thus to pant,  
As hart for water-brooks ; but from new springs,  
Deathless, to drink, and even with the stone  
To feel, time-free, and be no more alone.

## AN IRISH MELODY

**S**HE was as an apple on a dish,  
Red, that I put out my hand to.  
The old, grey Man—he guessed my wish,  
And gave me ashes and sand too.

But I laughed, and said: "Such apple to see,  
Red, is worth mud to eat;" and  
Then in sweet sleep come over me  
I saw bare shoulders, and feet, and

Lips that were lips, but roses too,  
And they kissed me awake, and made me  
Think of an orchard where there grew  
Apples—there met we and stayed we.

## STAR WRITING

**T**HIS was his play with Stella—he to write  
The stars upon her that make glad the night.  
So down she lay, and over her he knelt,  
And on her lips long kissed Orion's belt,  
And helm and flaming sword. Next on her chin  
Castor he kissed and the bright-burnished twin.  
On rosy cheek he kissed the Hyades,  
And on the other the rainy Pleiades.  
Then one remove—to set upon her brow  
The seven stars of an enchanted plough.  
And o'er the silky softness of her hair  
To draw a wind-kissed Cassiopeia's Chair.  
Arcturus and his bands  
He kissed upon her hands,  
And Sirius, Canopus on her feet,  
Which, sweet and cool, tempered their parching heat.  
Then, seeing there were more, and many too,  
"Darling," he said,  
"As in the west you see the tired stars do,  
That go to bed,

So must you, Stella, an obedient Sweet,  
And see where I have spread a perfumed sheet,  
Nearer to come, and on your shadowed breast  
Kiss all the crowded rest."

## BLUE

**T**HERE is a sea, Darling, that never keel  
Has ploughed. I will set sail on it,  
Following a bird until all grey things change  
To blue. Always in blue there seems,  
Blue of forget-me-not, speedwell, hyacinth, gentian,  
Sea, sky, and glacier ice, a drawing-on  
Of the human spirit, a beckoning, to thought  
That never soul has been quick enough to seize.  
Perhaps it is spread out somewhere beyond that sea.

It is the sea of loving a woman, sweet  
For ever by being enjoyed never in full.  
Oh, there are moments when human love, so given  
Completely, leaves the heart cold ; so that change—  
That one might be another man—is craved,  
That, rich again, love might be richly given.  
Those dead points, where no flowers are blue and  
growing,

Put fingers out that touch the soul to cold.  
Never will my love be completely given ;  
Never given, so never cold. So flowers will grow :  
Blue flowers will grow around it, sweetening it ;  
Easing the pain ; turning it to a violet.



## LAMENTATION

**H**IS Love is dead, dead ; gone  
Where never soft feet wait :  
Roses red grow on  
Her grave—have roses late,  
Roses red, a worth  
For him ? Her face,  
Sweeter than roses, earth  
Is, or just empty space.

His Love is dead, dead ; gone  
Where never cowslips grow :  
Upon a graven stone  
Four letters in a row.  
In one the waste seas flow :  
One is like wilted corn :  
Two make up all the woe  
Dead kisses are, unborn.

## INDIRA

I sat watching an Indian child, Indira,  
Lying in her mother's lap, her mother one  
Beautiful, proud, dressed in a lovely *sari*,  
Sakuntala as of old, but now mature,  
Able to rise in Parliament, and tell  
The listening senators of India's need ;  
Able to sit in the temple among the doctors,  
And argue of the law. And Indira looked  
Under dark lashes, out of her dark, dark eyes,  
Friendlily to my blue, but if I said :  
"Speak me a poem," then, a little shy,  
She'd lower her lashes, and lay her head upon  
Her mother's shoulder ; and the gesture made  
Her loveliness grow strangely lovelier,  
Till I, so full of wondering, hardly breathed.  
And so I said I must leave that land, and go  
Back to my kind, and lead a common life  
Among familiar things, and never see  
Lotus again, nor Indira's dark, dark eyes ;  
For hard it was to be at peace outside  
The fast-clamped doors of such a paradise.

## 2

And so I left that land, and went and lived  
A common life among familiar things,  
Until one day Indira came and sat  
Among my roses, drank some tea, and talked  
Of Oxford and her college there. Then I  
Said : "I must die and seek the friendly grave,  
Where is no pulse to hear, nor moan, nor sighs."  
It was too hard to be at peace outside  
The fast-clamped doors of that shut paradise.

## 3

But Indira came, and sat upon the stone,  
And sang an Indian song, and I awoke,  
And rose, and said : "I come from where the stairs  
Go up and down, and all is white and pure,  
And blue wings overshadow ; but no peace  
Was there for me for thinking of those days,  
And the clamped doors of Indira's paradise.  
And so I said to God that He must send  
Me back to thee, and God bade one to go,  
Leading the way ; and he said : 'Curst art thou  
And empty-hearted, since thou didst esteem  
Lightly thy kind ; and wilt be empty-hearted  
Even with Indira, because some bird  
Morning and evening will sing in tones not thine,  
And thou wilt feel shut out. When God hath made

Thee and the birds as one, and thou canst sing  
With the same throat, still wilt thou empty be  
Because of flowers that open to a world  
Not thine. When God hath made thee one with rose,  
Crocus and woodbine, and thy heart unfolds  
Petals like theirs, thou wilt empty be because  
Of lightly esteeming thy own kind. Thou then  
Wilt envy stones that crumble, because their ways  
Are not as thy ways. God will make thee one  
With stones that crumble, and thou wilt crumble too,  
And then the end. It is not too late. Repent.'  
But I said : 'Is she near ? I am content.' "

## TO BARBARA

**PRINCESS** Barbara, come and play.  
In pearls and satin, all to-day.  
In a long colonnaded hall  
Be the queen of old-time ball :  
Make the dull, empty chamber blaze  
With star and garter. Thread the maze  
Of long out-moded dance, until  
Powder and patches seem to fill  
The floor, with round about a ring  
Of stiff brocaded dames ; and bring  
Ambassadors from Teheran  
And Farthest East, with gem and fan,  
To watch the Franks display the wares  
Of fallen city and crumbled stairs,  
With, behind the inscrutable smile,  
Cold disdain. Do this awhile,  
You and I in the house, alone,  
You in your frock ; I like a stone,  
Still, in the corner. This evoke,  
Showing how Louis looked and spoke,  
Or the fierce Sarah ; how this miss  
Promised that gallant glove or kiss.

Do it with gesture, look, and tone,  
You and I in the house, alone.

Or be a sapphire, or be gem,  
Inanimate, in diadem  
Of Semiramis. Be a jet  
Lozenge in chancel pavement set.  
Or be figure carved at prow  
Of Viking ship, or granite brow  
Hewn, in court of Ramases.  
For my wonder be all these.

## 2

Throstle Barbara, come and bring  
Purcell back and Byrd to sing,  
Or boy and girl from lanes less deep  
Than now, worn deeper since. They sleep,  
The buttercups and daisies saying,  
"Simple as ours their lives were—peep  
bo!—simple their spinet-playing."  
Sing me their songs, or sing me those  
That Ronsard loved, or earlier ones,  
Those that one sang to his heart's rose,  
And she sang after to her sons.  
Sing me in English or in French,  
As you were pretty dairymaid,  
And I a rustic on a bench,  
Piping under an elm-tree shade.

Sing me the songs you write yourself,  
Slipped through our fingers, fairy-elf,  
Crooning them over a wild bird pressed  
In your white fingers to your breast.

## 3

Then let us to the Sorbonne go,  
With open book and footstep slow,  
And steep us there, doors shut, in lore,  
Written, of Wisdom, blind and hoar ;  
Blind, but with inward eyes lit up,  
And moist lips from the blood-red cup.  
Let us, loins girded, climb the steep  
Of Delphos, and the vigil keep,  
Which ended, ended then the night  
Of darkness, and the dawn is bright  
Over new shores ; the vigil kept  
By Dante while the dumb world slept.  
Then hear what Verlaine has to tell,  
Or Baudelaire ; or cast a spell  
Over each other from Keats's book  
Or Yeats's ; so Apollo's crook  
Follow to pastures where grow flowers  
That know no death nor winter hours.

## 4

Gipsy Barbara, come and dance  
On thyme, bare-footed. Tell me chance,  
When with silver I have crossed

Your hand. But no, no, what a frost  
Is fortune told. Then tell me true  
Things that make delight for you—  
Beech mast, acorn cups, and sloes,  
Crabs, and nuts ; the briar rose,  
Knapweed, Lady's Tresses, ferns,  
Wild geranium leaf that burns  
Blood-red every autumn ; broom,  
Sorrel of the wood, the gloom  
Dense of forests—tell me all ;  
Of all creatures, too, that call  
To each other, and to you,  
Climbing up the downs you knew.  
First the spinney, then the pool  
Where you dipped your body cool,  
With the morning star ablaze  
In the spear-point studded ways,  
And the owl and moth still winging  
To the hour of first bird's singing.  
What were better, in this room,  
Than gipsy woman, gipsy man,  
Slipping off their coil of doom,  
Should tell each other where they ran  
As children, and remember things,  
The very names of which are wings  
More than wine is ever. Kick  
Satin slippers off, and quick  
Down on sofa sink, with knees  
Folded under, which to kiss



Were to poet-spirit ease  
Greater far than writing this.  
Tell, then, gipsy woman tell  
Of leaf and blade and cup and bell  
And moss and lichen, wet with tears,  
Star-shed in the night ; of seed  
Fallen from swollen, yellow ears ;  
Of great moon-daisies, climbing weed  
In hedges, thick with berries red  
Or black—But how ? How tell ? Though led,  
Love-lamped, to woman, what does man  
Know of her nature, when the span  
Is over ? How, then, slip the coil,  
And grow one with the stranger beat  
Of heart in those that never toil,  
And have no breasts, nor knees, nor feet ?

## 5

Pagan Barbara, hear this too.  
Do one thing and never rue.  
Born to sing, a poet sings,  
Rooted in the depth of things.  
Not for him to love one maid,  
And in peace to ply a trade.  
Busy keeping body, hands.  
His to watch, where'er he stands,  
With unshadowed eyes, who goes,  
Kith and kin and friends and foes ;

For a moment being each,  
Speaking ever a new speech ;  
So to gather in his verse,  
Shadowed by the wanderer's curse.  
I am weary of my loss ;  
Be to me dread Atropos :  
Take the bitter, horrid shears,  
And cut off the weary years.  
As for you, you child divine,  
Mix the herbs, the poison nine.  
Since the Fates set golden door  
Open for you ; shut the dark ;  
Lit your sun ; shut out the frore ;  
Made you sister of the lark ;  
Whence no travail, and songs need  
Dark as light, both flower and weed—  
As for you, you child divine,  
Mix the herbs, the poison nine,  
And then gather in your verse,  
Shadowed by the wanderer's curse.

## A' MAN OF A WOMAN

**G**OD took some river water, I think, and wine,  
And birch tree leaves, and ivy, and dark of pine  
Forests, and violets, and dew-wet white  
And pink of hedge rose for to make that sprite ;  
Who comes to me with rustle of bearded corn,  
And first lark's singing in the breath of morn ;  
Who comes to me who have loved golden words  
Of bibles, and all song of all wild birds ;  
Who comes to me who have gone up and down,  
Seeking for one to be my heart's wild rose,  
And have not found her ever ; so that brown  
Eyes I have seen haunt me, and blue, and those  
Breasts I have never seen—oh, would God take  
Me, and put me to sleep for pity's sake.

# 5

## LAST POEMS



## PEACE

**T**HERE is one peace, the peace that falls  
Beyond where man to maiden calls,  
And maiden answers: where no day  
Endeth in night, and night is grey  
Before the dawning; where no light  
Is shaped as violet, lily, sight  
Bringing a gladness to man's heart.  
It is a peace that draws no part  
From aught possessed; be it such thing  
As night that makes the stars to sing  
Along the fields where light is sown  
Thickest, which little is man's own.  
It is a peace that doth begin  
While noises harsh, discordant, din  
His ears. It would not cease to grow  
Deeper and deeper, even if woe,  
As men conceive, were now his lot.  
It cometh not from thing forgot.  
Old misery; and joy to be  
Addeth not to it. By the Sea  
Of Galilee 'twas spoken plain:

And when it falls, it falls like rain  
On thirsty fields, where the hard clod  
Is sweetened for the flowers of God.

## ETERNITY

**V**AUGHAN saw eternity one night  
Like a great ring of pure and endless light,  
All calm as it was bright.

And such it is. Our teachers saw  
That splendour without awe,  
Nor on one night alone. For them  
It stayed as the star of Bethlehem  
Stayed. For them no Herod-sword  
Made black the translated word.



## HOPE

**I**F you believed that Christ was Joseph's son,  
Nor sinless utterly, and yet believed  
He walked on the waters, fed the multitude  
By the lake-side, raised Lazarus, and died,  
And rose the third day.

If you believed that man  
In God, the infinite Spirit, lived and moved  
And had his being ; if you believed infinitude  
Ended not at your skin, where you begin,  
Which were no infinite, but verily  
Is, so that nothing else can be but thought,  
Idea, or image of God, by God sustained ;

If you ceased teaching children they are born  
In sin, if you ceased putting before their minds  
The probability, nay the certainty  
That they will hourly and daily sin, until  
Death is their wages :

What if you tried that way  
Some fifty years, what might the world be like,  
The fifty ended ? Worse, you think ? much worse ?

There is but one thing worth the struggle of man—  
Christ-consciousness. Existence without the hope  
Of reaching that, for man or ape or midge,  
Is simulacrum, whether you dwell on earth  
Or heaven.

I see it not impossible utterly  
That Joseph's son should grow from boyhood up,  
Not sinless utterly, but, like Samuel,  
Obedient unto God, and striving ever  
For purity and righteousness, until  
Forty days in the wilderness should show  
His brooding mind the true relationship  
Of God to man and man to God; henceforth  
Sinless because of the strength that knowledge gave;  
Able to heal, as walking in God's light;  
Able to walk the water, being spirit;  
Able to raise up Lazarus as dead  
Only in his man's thought; able to rise  
Himself from death, as being the imperishable  
Image of God.

I see it not as utterly  
Impossible, God knows, that here on earth,  
Years hence or even instantly, a man  
Or woman, any man or any woman,  
Or a mere child, after the forty days  
Allotted him or her or it of prayer  
And meditation in life's wilderness,  
Should to men's haunts and ways return a Christ,

Able to heal, to walk the waters, feed  
The multitude, raise Lazarus, rise himself :  
And that is what I would teach myself to know.

The other way, your way, what sense is there  
In it ? It helps me not to tell myself  
That I was sick and shall be sick again,  
Even many times : and would you have me tell  
My body that ? It helps me not to say,  
I having many miles to walk, that I  
Am weak, and cannot walk so far for pain  
Of weariness, and being foot-sore ; so  
I say not that. It helps me not to learn  
To tell myself I cannot.

How can it help me, then,  
To tell me, spirit, that I, a sinful man,  
Must sin, that what Christ rose to must for me  
Be harder far to reach, if not impossible,  
Here or hereafter. (I speak of Christ as risen  
To higher things, deeming the carpenter's boy  
Hardly the equal of the Christ who gave  
Judas the sop, and in Gethsemane  
Prayed and bade others watch and pray.)

I think  
This is worth thinking of, and that nothing more  
Calls for man's patient thought than all the sad  
And damnable imbecility of his ways  
Of dealing with himself.

## LIFE

**THIS** is the stream that the broken human pitchers  
All have dripped in since the beginning of time;  
Men's children's tears and the tears of the Lamentation;  
Abel's blood, and the blood of a million crimes;  
And there in the centre that curdled, blood-red current  
Flows from the broken door where Love, behind,  
Wrings out the dumb-struck anguish that no healing  
Human can heal, and even God seems blind.  
This is the stream that the broken human pitchers  
All have dripped in since the beginning of time.  
And there his steps will end—but no, for a wisdom,  
His, once earth's, and yet once more to be  
Earth's, he is shod with, and his thighs the current.  
Even that desolate, hissing, curdled sea,  
Part as he crosses; and follows a long wake, flying,  
Of birds, and some on his shoulders perched; the sun  
Bright on his naked limbs, bright on the plumage  
Of those swift birds whose new life is begun  
With his; for the bondage of Man made all Creation  
Groan in travail. The travail now is done.



## **EPILOGUE**



**SHUT** the insane World out.

I live above  
That wreck-strewn sea.

I see the cradle  
There in the stable,  
And Magi bending low the knee.

I see the dove  
Descend on Christ;  
I see him priced;  
I hear the talk on the Emmaus road;  
I see the coals burning at Galilee;  
I am where Peter's lambs abode.

Years pass, and into hell I go  
With Dante, but the cradle  
Still in the stable

Is, and Magi bend the knee.  
I see Beatrice, and know  
All things in heaven and earth and sea;  
And still I am where Peter's lambs abode.

There is no first or last:  
All change is past.  
There is no far or near:  
Stars are my friends upon the road: I hear



Milton intone his psalm :

I hear the calm

Of great verse sung unto a little clan

By Keats, unheard

Save by the quiet primrose, and the span

Of heaven, and all the feathery things and furred.

I pour the blue

Of summer skies into a cup, and drink

Moonlight and dew:

Manna is all my meat.

I wash all men and women's feet;

And every child I think

My own, and see

That child laid in the cradle,

There in the stable,

And Jesus bending low the knee.









